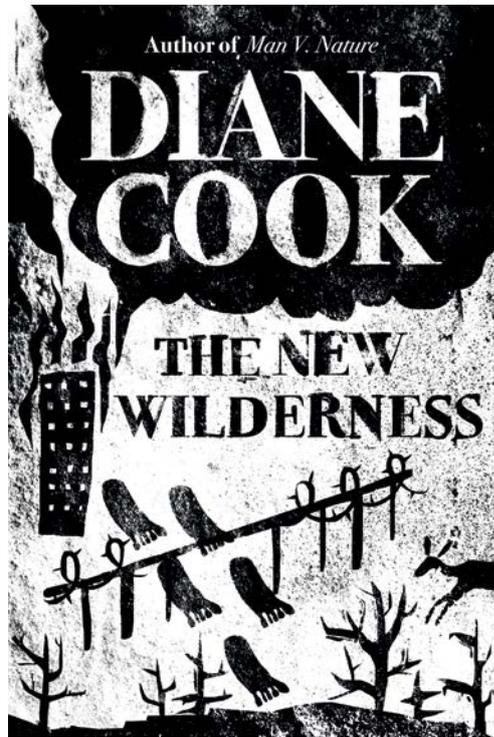


The
2020
Booker
Prize

Readers' Guide



The New Wilderness

Diane Cook

Oneworld Publications

Other novels by Diane Cook
Man v. Nature (2015)

thebookerprizes.com

About the author

Diane Cook is a critically acclaimed novelist and short story writer. Her debut collection, *Man v Nature* (Oneworld, 2015), was shortlisted for the Guardian First Book Award and the L.A. Times Book Prize. She is a recipient of a 2016 fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts, and her stories have appeared in *Harper's*, *Tin House* and *Granta*, and been anthologised in *Best American Short Stories*. A former producer for the radio show, *This American Life*, she lives in Brooklyn.

About the book

A daring, passionate and terrifying novel about a mother's battle to save her daughter in a world ravaged by climate change.

Bea's five-year-old daughter, Agnes, is wasting away, consumed by the smog and pollution of the over-developed metropolis they call home. If they stay in the city, Agnes will die, but there is only one alternative - joining a group of volunteers in the Wilderness State. This vast expanse of unwelcoming, untamed land is untouched by mankind. Until now. Living as nomadic hunter-gatherers, Bea and Agnes slowly learn how to survive on this unpredictable, often dangerous land. But as Agnes embraces the wild freedom of her new existence, Bea realises that saving her daughter's life means losing her in a different way.

At once a blazing lament of our contempt for nature and a deeply humane portrayal of motherhood, and what it means to be human, *The New Wilderness* is an extraordinary, compelling novel for our times.

What the judges thought

'Wonderfully imagined and written, this is a tense future-shock novel that's also a tender exploration of a mother-daughter relationship under extreme pressure.'

Discussion points

What do you think about the idea of the Wilderness State? How have the Community members adapted to living there?

Agnes has spent most of her childhood in the Wilderness and has few memories of the City. How has this affected her understanding of the world? How does she differ to the Newcomer children?

How do you think the Community members' attitudes towards life and death have been impacted by living in the Wilderness?

Discuss the mother-daughter relationship between Bea and Agnes. Does Bea's absence change how they interact?

What role does the arrival of the Newcomers play in the novel?

Themed reading

Summerwater by Sarah Moss

Underland by Robert Macfarlane

The Overstory by Richard Powers

Flight Behaviour by Barbara Kingsolver

Useful links

<https://dianemariemcook.com/>

<https://www.nyjournalofbooks.com/book-review/new-wilderness>

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/aug/23/the-new-wilderness-by-diane-cook-review-a-planet-brought-to-its-knees-by-the-human-race>

https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/diane-cooks-the-new-wilderness-is-accidentally-timely-but-also-timeless/2020/08/17/1cbca6f6-dbb1c-11ea-b205-ff838e15a9a6_story.html

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/books/what-to-read/new-wilderness-diane-cook-review-dystopia-plus-bears/>

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